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Congressman Childers Votes for Final Passage of SCHIP

February 4, 2009

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"Today marks a great triumph for all American children," said Congressman Travis Childers. "No child in the First District or anywhere throughout our nation should ever go without medical care, and our government has made an important commitment to ensuring that children throughout this country receive the coverage they need and deserve.

"In the face of recession and job loss, hard working families across North Mississippi are struggling to provide health insurance for their children, and today's legislative victory will help ease this burden. This reauthorization greatly benefits Mississippi, nearly tripling the state's share of SCHIP funds, preserving coverage for the more than 81,000 children who are already enrolled, and extending coverage to almost half of those who are currently uninsured.

"I commend the authors of the reauthorized program for using a more accurate formula to ensure that funding goes to states like ours where families need it the most, and including restrictions to prevent wealthier states from abusing funds."

The final version of this bill has even stronger provisions to restrict states from misusing

SCHIP funds. For instance:

- There will be no waivers issued to cover parents under the CHIP program, and states that have received waivers to cover low-income parents under CHIP will be able to transition these parents into a separate block grant.

- The current law prohibition on waivers for coverage of childless adults is retained. Childless adults who are currently covered will transition off CHIP. For states that have received CHIP waivers to cover childless adults, those waivers will be terminated after a one-year period.

The Congressional Research Service reports that the reauthorization act increases SCHIP funds for Mississippi from \$64.1 million in FY2009 under current law to \$183.7 million in FY2009. According to Families USA, 119,000 children in Mississippi are currently uninsured. Of these children, 55,000 - nearly half - will be able to receive coverage through the reauthorization of SCHIP.

Without today's reauthorization, Mississippi would have no federal SCHIP funds after April 1, 2009 when the program would expire, and the state's projected funding shortfalls for FY 2009 would total \$19 million. However, because of today's SCHIP renewal and extension, Mississippi will be able to both continue covering children already enrolled in the program, and extend coverage to additional low-income children who are currently uninsured.

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